Title: Interview with Lloyd Ward

Date: April 15, 2025

Location: Shiloh United Methodist Church in Crisfield

Interviewer(s): Christopher Knorr and Eva Arnold

Interviewee: Lloyd Ward

Introduction: Lloyd Ward, a former teacher, longtime active community member and a lifelong Crisfielder of over 70 years, talks of his experiences with the people in and outside of the community in cooperating to improve upon Crisfield. He talks of how adding more businesses, being more positive role models for the youth, and being persistent will help Crisfield today and in the future.

[Transcription begins]

Christopher Knorr (Knorr): Alright, hello, my name is Chris Knorr. I'm one of the interviewers.

Eva Arnold (Arnold): My name is Eva Arnold.

Knorr: And we're here with…

Lloyd Ward (Ward): Lloyd Ward.

Knorr: And we're scheduled for about one hour session on Tuesday, April 15th.

Arnold: Yes.

Knorr: So our first question is, how long have you lived in the Crisfield area?

Ward: Most of my life, most of my life. I- I was born here but then moved to Marion. But I've been affiliated with this area most of my life.

Knorr: Why in Crisfield has made you kind of come back if you were here and then left and then came back?

Ward: Well, I really didn't leave because I was only in Marion, so I was in Crisfield every day.

Arnold: Is your family from Crisfield?

Ward: Yes, they are.

Knorr: What are some of your most cherished memories of maybe growing up in Crisfield or living here?

Ward: Okay, living in Crisfield, everybody being friendly, everybody playing together, participating in a lot of positive things, seeing a lot youngsters along with me, helping some of the elders, also encouraging some of other younger- younger kids and adults to come to church.

Knorr: Would you say that the church life and community has helped foster your appreciation and love for Crisfield?

Ward: Very much so.

Arnold: I know you said you were born here, how do you think Crisfield as a whole has changed since you were born here until today?

Ward: Well basically, with the lack of employment, we've had an exodus in Crisfield. And with- with that exodus, then we've lost a lot of talent. We've lost, the city has lost a lot of- lot of tax base and other opportunities to bring things here to the town that could be supported financially.

Arnold: Tourism and stuff?

Ward: Tourism, other entertainment, also some of the arts. At one time we- we had some- some of the arts things going on, galas and so forth. And that is pretty much almost absent.

Knorr: Yeah, speaking on kind of the entertainment and everything, how do you entertain yourself in Crisfield? Are there outside of maybe the church, are there other community events that you go to?

Ward: Every now and then I- I will travel to Salisbury sometime to a concert and sometime I- I play music. I'll go to the nursing home and play some music. Sometimes I'm invited to play for private parties.

Arnold: You play an instrument.

Ward: Piano.

Arnold: Piano.

Knorr: What- what has been the role of kind of the waterfront played in like recreation or social life in the City of Crisfield?

Ward: Well, based of water with the boats with the Crab Derby with the- the boat docking contest with the marina itself, that in itself brings forth an influx from out of town. But also, the scenery, the beautiful sunsets all from the water, so that in itself is definitely one of our fine attributes.

Knorr: Would you say some of those attributes and the influx is kind of what has kept you here in Crisfield, that you appreciate your relationship with them?

Ward: Yes, yes, most definitely.

Ward: You've talked about how businesses have been faltering a little bit. Do you think, we know there's a- at least there was a huge seafood industry here? Do you- that is one of the faltering businesses that you were talking about?

Ward: Yes, that is correct, but also with the loss of Carver Hall, and also Mrs. Paul's Kitchen. They were two vital entities that we had here in town that left us.

Knorr: Has storming or flooding ever impacted kind of the connection with the water or the recreation of the water, or anything like that?

Ward: Most definitely. Most definitely especially in '12 with the magnitude of Sandy. Sandy even in the area where I live that was- that was like four feet up- up tide right by the house. [2012]

Ward: Tell us a little bit about how that affected your daily life leading up to the storm and then after the storm, of course, whether it be work or social life or community?

Ward: Well, first of all, I wasn't able to go anywhere until they finally evacuated the area. And when you evacuated area, you were taken to the shelter. But it took days for the water to really go off and be cleared off. Then after you were- you were concerned with damage. Be it roofing or- or siding or- or the wash underneath the house and all that type of thing. And of course, the debris that was all in the yard and roads and streets and so on was like you would not believe it. So, it was serious. Very serious impact and day after, just the- the turmoil that was witnessed with Sandy just left a scar in life, just hoping that it not return again, at least not to that magnitude. In fact, we did have a storm on the anniversary of Sandy a few years ago. It wasn't another magnitude of Sandy, but it was a storm, it was flooding. We got maybe like- like three feet of flooding, which is still not good.

Knorr: Yeah, how severe do the flooding or storming have to be to kind of impact like transportation or your ability to get out?

Ward: Not much, not much, because we had some heavy rain just Friday, Friday night into Saturday. We had minor flooding, but we had to use boots and so forth in order to get- get there.

We also had to move our cars, because the cars were left there- left there where that minor flooding was, that would have been a problem.

Knorr: Do you personally prepare for the flooding or any like major rain events like you said maybe preparing with your car or your house or any way?

Ward: By all means, yes. By all means, yes, especially with moving the vehicles. And we really get an idea that it might be kind of extensive, or the rain might be really very hard, and it might at the time of high tide. And we- we also look at those factors. And that definitely, if it's the time high tide, we definitely have to look at that. And at the wind direction, basically, it's- it's northeast in this area. That really is a flooding- flooding out wind. And so we have to watch the wind and the tide tables and the whole thing in order to prepare moving vehicles and also letting other folks know and also watching out for emergency services. See whether they're gonna send any type of bulletins through.

Arnold: I was going to ask, just out of curiosity, where do you usually look to get this kind of information or news, whether it's TV or other community members?

Ward: It's a combination. Internet, TV, also through emergency services. And of course, the newspaper has tide tables. High- high and low tide and that in itself is a good guy.

Knorr: Yeah, is that something that not just you and your family, but something that is a community-based effort that a lot of people have to focus on, that's something that's kind of embedded in the community?

Ward: Yes, it is. Yes. Yes, and- and also we also have a network of calling, just reminding people or seeing whether they've seen the- the forecasts. And that in itself allows other- other people to move their cars or vehicles or whatever or make preparations.

Knorr: What would you say is the most common way to prepare for major storming events?

Ward: Making sure that we have candles, extra batteries, extra food, extra water. Moving the vehicles, calling neighbors and calling friends, and also watching- watching all the reports to make sure that if there- there's a big change that we may have to evacuate.

Arnold: I know you talked about a little bit about the damages from Hurricane Sandy and just other flooding in general. How does the city, county or state handle damages and, you know, emergency evacuations or things like that? And do you have any opinions on how that's done or how it should change?

Ward: Okay the city, the city, they issue bulletins or directives, you know, letting folks know that- that there is a storm or flood or- or some kind of type of incoming disaster that they should be prepared for and what the disaster is. Be it flooding or gale winds or the whole thing, or

extreme lightning, the whole thing. But that the bulletin themself, and also their phone, they call, the city call. They will call, if you have email, they will send emails. So that and that stuff, I think it's a very good idea. And of course, usually that's done quite a bit in advance, as soon as they know. Usually, sometimes they'll have like three- or four-day warning that, you know, this disaster is coming to make preparation.

Arnold: Are there any projects regarding flooding, whether again it be on the city, county or state level that you're excited about or that concern you?

Ward: Well, I'm- I'm really excited with- with the- the assistance that was given through the- the Mennonite Services and some of those other- other work detail groups. And, you know, they- they were there and they helped and they wanted to know your concerns and what you needed and how they could help. But also not, in addition to that, they also did follow up. Is everything- is everything going well now? You know, it's possible that we may be able to have additional funding, so we might be able help you again. So that in itself was really good.

Knorr: Do you think that the history of kind of Crisfield and the areas that can get harder hit are kind of important in incorporating these different projects, like you said they'll go back to you and, you know, if we have other things?

Ward: Absolutely, the history definitely has a great impact.

Arnold: What role do you think funding plays? Do you think, I mean, we've heard from other people that they think the money is there and that the implementation isn't there or it's being used for the wrong stuff and some other people say there just isn't enough money.

Ward: I feel it's not- not enough money. I don't feel that- that it's- that it's not used for the- the purpose. I've been here for a long time, and I'm constantly checking to see what's being used, how it's being used, also making recommendations for usage, rather than just talking, making recommendations.

Arnold: Going off of that, have you ever attended any community events, not necessarily for entertainment, but meetings with like City of Commerce and stuff like that?

Ward: No, not City Council. At one time I, when I had a little more time, I would go to the City Council. Sometimes they have some brainstorming meetings, like at the library or somewhere. Every now and then I'll try to sit in on them. Put out some kind of state given feedback to the City Council members themselves. And so, they're well aware of how I stand on- on certain issues and- and my recommendations.

Knorr: I was gonna say, do you think that they, obviously it's good that you've voiced your opinion and- and recommendations for what you believe should happen, do you think they do a good job of connecting people's recommendations to what the projects are ongoing with?

Ward: Most definitely, most definitely, yes.

Knorr: What are kind of the changes that you've noticed in the land and the water and the storms that have been coming up, have you? A lot of people.

Ward: I've- I've noticed that the flooding is- is more intense, more intense and I noticed that it's been a great- through the years it's been a good deal of erosion.

Arnold: Do you think that, I mean we've heard tons of people talking about flooding, do you think climate change is something that's actively discussed or is that kind of a separate subject from flooding?

Ward: No, it's- it's being discussed. But as far as the erosion, you can look over, if you really knew this territory, you can over- over in the marshes and the- the river's much closer to- to the- the mainland than- than what it was many years ago.

Arnold: Do you think that younger generations are less likely to stay in Crisfield?

Ward: That's a hard question, but if- if they're given some opportunities for certain things, yes, cause they have to have employment. But they have to be engaged in some type of recreational activities and some also interested in their arts and sports.

Knorr: So, would you say to help kind of revitalize and- and bring back kind of Crisfield to what it was, that it's just as important to develop some of these other business opportunities or art opportunities or various ways that maybe bring in some more youth and.

Ward: Yes, yes. And see, if- if they have sufficient employment opportunities, gainful employment, I don't mean minimum wage. But see, they have to have gainful employment to be able to support business. It's like a domino effect, they make money you can go out, they can do this, they can do that, make no money, they can't do that.

Arnold: Just out of curiosity, do you have children?

Ward: No.

Arnold: I was going to ask about what it was like raising them. But otherwise, are you hopeful for the future of Crisfield, and where do you see it headed in the next 20 years?

Ward: I see it coming back and being stronger, and yes, I am very much so positive in reference to- to the city of Crisfield.

Knorr: Can you speak a little bit more on that hopefulness and positivity towards the city of Crisfield?

Ward: Well, the city is constantly working to try to get new businesses. They're going after grants in which the grants are coming in. That's- that's common knowledge, cause that's in the paper. But they're doing it aggressively and they're constantly taking input from- from the residents. And, you know, the residents are stating, in fact, they even have some ideas what they would like to see, which is good. And they are listened to.

Knorr: Would you say that other members of the community would be as hopeful and- and on board with the belief of kind of the future in Crisfield in the next 20 years?

Ward: Yes, yes, I will.

Arnold: We know that a huge portion of the population here are retirees and a lot of people move here for that purpose because it's on the water and it's quiet. Do you still see an influx of people moving here or would you say it's died down?

Ward: It's still folks moving here. In fact, there's some of them even building houses, not building out, some are restoring houses. When I say restoring houses, I meant completely, when they finish it's beautiful.

Arnold: We've heard a lot about, or at least I have, about people restoring historic homes that are low lying. How do you feel about- we know that low lying areas are super prone to flooding. Do you think more people are- are doing stuff like that or rather moving up north or how- how are people distributing differently knowing now that flooding is- is on the rise?

Ward: Well, some are aware that the flood is on the rise, but some are not letting- letting that deter them. They- they still going, I'll go with the flow, if it really happens, I have to deal with it after.

Knorr: Have you had any- have you had to make any major repairs to your home during any major flooding?

Ward: Not major, but the roof was damaged somewhat, so- so it did have to be done.

Knorr: Do you know anybody else that has had to, or has it all been kind of minor?

Ward: Oh, no, no. I'm, like I said, no serious damage, you know, flooring and that type of thing. See I, the- the water did not come into my house. Even with it being four feet, it did not come into my house. So, I- I was extremely fortunate. But some others, they had floors damaged, carpet, the whole bit. Computers throwing up, refrigerators, you know, electric ranges and all that, electric wiring. Some folks' wiring was completely damaged. So, yeah. The damage, in- in many cases, not only did I did it. The houses themselves, but the property themselves, the land, the soil and so forth was washed away in some- some areas. It made holes as a result of the pressure from- from the tide.

Arnold: I know repairs and stuff like that can be super-costly, especially if it's out-of-pocket. How long do you think these repairs took for people and did it put them out of work and what kind of effects do you think it has or what- what do people usually do if they can't something like that?

Ward: We still have residual effect now. Some are still trying to repair and to restore and that type of thing even now after Sandy and Sandy was in 2012. [pauses]

Knorr: Yeah, and I'm sure with more flooding events and everything, it just kind of, it- it can almost feel like a never-ending project, you know, you fix something here and then the flooding comes back in and then.

Ward: And then don't have another minor like flood, or intermediate flood that could mean even more damage again. Not as extensive as Sandy, but it could mean damage again, and especially the wind also blowing those shingles off, that type of thing. That's serious. See we're talking about gale wind, that's a gale warning all now, until like eight o'clock or something. So, who knows what we can think of, winds move, gushed up from time to time.

Knorr: Would you say that there's a good community base around kind of trying to help each other out though in that sense?

Ward: Most definitely. Most definitely. Even years ago, when- when we had a major blizzard in this area, it was major for this area. When we said three feet of snow, you know, we had folks that volunteered their trucks and they carried people all day long, free of charge. Free of charge, you got to get this, you've got to pick up medicine. They just had the trucks rolling. So, yes.

Knorr: We've heard some people talk about what they've loved about Crisfield when they grew up and the what keeps them attached to it is like the volunteerism and the way that the community is built around helping each other out.

Ward: Most definitely. Most definitely. That is totally correct. Totally correct.

Arnold: How do you feel the- do you think the elderly community is affected differently by these- these storms and flood events than- than the younger generations?

Ward: So much so, cause they cannot get out, and a lot of things they cannot get done, not- not unless they're able to call somebody else. If their phone lines are down, then it's really bad. When you say the elderly, I'm one of those. I'm one of those. I'm 3 3 score and 10 plus.

Arnold: No, not quiet. I- I know I said it earlier about the retired- retired community on the rise and- and there is a lot a lot of people nowadays who are either physically disabled or mentally disabled and they- they have trouble sourcing- sourcing help and stuff so I was curious about

that. In terms of relocation, I know you've lived here your whole life. Have you ever thought about moving or is that something you've- you've thought about?

Ward: No. I was gonna to move, but my mother took ill. I had a position at the Pentagon, and I was all prepared to move. But she took ill, so she said she needed me, and so she was first, first prior.

Arnold: Do you think family keeps a lot of people here?

Ward: Very much so.

Knorr: Do you hope that the younger generations may not experience the same, the exact same experiences that you've had in Crisfield, but that they can still share the same connection, whether it not be the same experience, but the same kind of connection?

Ward: I- I definitely hope so and I really do believe they will. First of all, we're- we're constantly trying to foster that type of mentality. Encouraging them to- to be concerned with others, respecting others, you know. Do what you can. You know, somebody else that can do it, let's do the network. Get them to do it. You know that they do, they have electrical, let them talk. You know they have technical and other areas, get- get them involved. Put that pool all together and we can solve a lot of things.

Knorr: I know the mayor has started a new youth initiative, similar to what you're speaking of, of trying to get them more involved and more a part of the- I'm sure that there's a large group of the community that- that does take advantage of it, and there's probably some that don't as much that maybe they're trying to help get everybody involved with the youth and foster that connection, like you said.

Ward: Very much so trying being behind the scenes. I'm trying to do a lot of that myself. You know I retired from the school system ten years ago and since that time I've definitely been trying to assist kids and behind the scene do some mentoring with them informally. Informally just talking motivating, how- how was your day at school today? What did you find a problem? You know, did you communicate the plan, the problem to the parents? Had you communicate with the teacher? If it's- if it's something that you don't understand. So, I'm constantly trying to motivate the youngsters. You know I taught- I taught alternative school for a number of years at night school. So, I was constantly involved with conflict resolution, but also motivation and direction. So, I let those skills be- be known, and also, well, what I don't know. But I'm constantly trying to motivate them and trying to talk to them to provide direction in a positive- positive way. But also encouraging them to go to school to higher- higher level education. They have to listen to that all- all the time.

Arnold: If you were to be advertising Crisfield to a stranger or to somebody who was thinking about moving here, what would you describe it as?

Ward: Come to a land of unity. Come to land of friend- of friendliness. Come to a land of tranquility. Come to a land where- where we care, and that is true. We do care. [pauses]

Knorr: When we've talked to some of the other people sometimes, they've said that they've lived in Crisfield for, you know, multiple different years and decades. They said maybe this was the best time to move to Crisfield, or maybe this is the best time. Would you say that the best to move to Crisfield would be a past, or would it even be the present and the ongoing future, what would you?

Ward: Most definitely the present, now, present. First of all, we have the access to grants and other help and work crews and that type of thing that we did not have in the past. That in itself has helped a lot of people and also helped to motivate a lot people. So, I definitely feel that this would be the ideal time to come to this area.

Knorr: Kind of a not looking back at the way things were but kind of moving with the way things are going and trying to, you know, like you're saying build the motivation and the momentum to help propel Crisfield forward, you'd say?

Ward: Yes, yes. Yeah, I definitely feel that this would be an ideal time for coming, as opposed to have been there a few years ago.

Arnold: How do you think we can rebuild businesses and even shoppers in Crisfield?

Ward: Well, there must be a little more diversity, more, the offerings must be larger. You know, but we have only limited stores. The restaurants are, you know, that's limited, too. And a lot of them do almost some of the same stuff. But if we had some that was a wider variety. [pauses]

Arnold: Do you have any wisdom that you would share with future generations, whether it be related to Crisfield or completely unrelated to the interview?

Ward: Yes indeed, I would. Whatever you do, do it the- the best that you can, but be relentless and determined to reach the goal. It may not be easy, but just because you- you couldn't do it all that time, don't give up. Keep trying. Back in my classes, I said, try, try again. That in itself, motivated a lot- lot of my students to- to really excel. You know, they'd be miserable, well, "I wasn't able to do this, I can't do this." Okay, wait a minute, we're gonna work on this together. We're gonna take, we're gonna dissect it, and we're going to work it together until you can do it. And after he got this, he said, "Oh, you were right all along." I said, "I knew that, you just did it."

Knorr: When you were a teacher, I guess did you, was there any specific field that you worked in, or you were like a?

Ward: Well, for a while, well the alternate was basically a combination, but then after I- I was in English and music. My minor was music, so they took advantage of that too.

Arnold: What age group for the kids usually was it or is it anything?

Ward: Oh, don't you say that. What made- what made you come up with that? I had juniors' - juniors and seniors. And I had sophomores.

Arnold: So high school-aged?

Ward: High school, but later on they- they moved me to- they wanted me to- to work with little kids. So, I said, "Well, that'd be different." I said, "Do you think you can handle it?" I said, "No, I don't mind, I can do that." They said, "Will you? You know, we realize that you're older now," but I said, "That's not a problem. My physical body's older. My outlook is still young." And, you know, I had the kids and it was no problem. I was working with them and they- they were having fun; I was having fun. The administration come down, see what they're doing, and say, "Oh, you're right, but the kids?" I said, "Why not?"

Arnold: Obviously the- the groups of people that we're interviewing that don't include high school-aged kids and- and even younger, what do you think the outlook of student-aged kids is on Crisfield and the future of Crisfield and what it is?

Ward: Okay, with the outlook for- for the kids, some are not very positive, you know. I picked it up because I'm constantly in the street and around places and they pick up a lot of negativity, in fact, some- some from their parents, but also from, mainly from the streets, from the street center and a lot is grossly inaccurate. Grossly and they told me, "It's no need, you're doing that because you can't, first of all you can't. I couldn't do it and you can't either." And some will listen to that rhetoric, where I was just the opposite, you told me I couldn't do it, that was the motivation for me to do it.

Knorr: Would you say, kind of speaking on that, would you say that maybe that perception of kind of Crisfield, of like what do you say people say you can't or you won't be able to make it here has kind of been one of the larger damaging effects to Crisfield's youth of people having that outlook?

Ward: Some. Some. But a lot of that has been curtailed because a lot- lot of folks are constantly talking. They're even sending- sending their circles and so forth privately to friends that they know to let them know how they feel and why- why they feel in that way. So, Crisfield can- can move forward if folks will keep positive. Keep a positive outlook. Just because one, as I said, one thing does not work don't mean that all things will not work. Just because you don't get one grant don't need that you won't get the next grant, rather than saying, "Well I tried to get a grant now. I'm finished." I don't like that. See, I'm relentless in what I'm doing, relentless. See, I played

here at this church for probably a combination of both of your ages, almost. Since '57, 1957, is it a combination of your ages?

Knorr: Yeah, I would say, definitely, yeah.

Arnold: Is there anything just to- to- to wrap up that we haven't asked or that we haven't, that you haven't said that you would like to share with us about Crisfield and- and the community?

Ward: Not really, but Crisfield has basically been a faith community. A community of faith. If they keep that outlook, we can and we will make it. Believing in one another. And see, I do believe in others. And you know, I don't have any- any problem saying that. I don't have any problems working with other folk others. I don't have any trouble assisting or being assisted. So, you know, I'm- I'm always open to help. It doesn't matter who it is. And of course, they- they know that. Down through the years when they had, when they used to have galas and all that type of thing, they'd ask me to play. I said, "Okay, no problem." You know, Christmas time they, sometime they'd put Christmas galas and so on. "Sing." "No problem, I'll sing." "Might have to play for somebody." "No, problem, I'll do that too." "We'd like to see a little- little more participation. Can you get some more?" "I'll, I'll bring some more. In fact, I bring my choir members." So, that's the type of thing we've tried to do, basically to support. Support. We believe in Crisfield. We definitely want to support, and don't mind getting help, and try and also help them. See, sometimes help is right at your- your fingers, but you have not asked. Right at your fingers, we have not asked. When I worked at- worked in the school system, we had a lot of things that we- that- that- that were not budgeted. But, you know, parents heard us talking and they said, "We- we know some sources. We got clubs and that type of thing." They came up with the money. So, my whole thing is that if we keep positive, we can get this thing done. That's definitely my- my full belief. I believe that and- and I have no intention of giving up. Even though I'm listed- listed as old now, but I- I don't think old.

Knorr: Yeah, I'd say that's- that's one big trend that I think I've seen in a lot of my interviews with people from Crisfield. It's like they've been proud to be from Crisfield and that community even when, you know, maybe somebody who's coming from outside has said, you know, maybe the best course of action is just kind of everybody kind of push out of these low-level lands but the people within Crisfield are far more optimistic and together about. Would you say that's what makes you most proud of being from Crisfield?

Ward: Yes. Yes indeed. Yes, indeed. Yes. [pauses] Anything else?

Arnold: I think that's about it. I think we covered most of it.

Ward: But yeah, Crisfield is in good land, and we're going to try to do what we can to make the necessary improvements step by step. It can't be done overnight, but we got to be persistent.

Arnold: Stubborn, but in a good way.

Ward: That's right, yeah, but that works though.

Arnold: Alrighty.

Knorr: Well, thank you.

Ward: Well, certainly, certainly.

[Transcript ends]